

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Little Snake Field Office
455 Emerson Street
Craig, CO 81625-1129

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

EA NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2010-0078-EA

ALLOTMENT NUMBERS: 04528/04544

PROJECT NAME: Authorization of temporary, non-renewable livestock grazing on the College Station #04528 and East Experiment Station #04544 Allotments.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: see allotment maps, Attachments 1a and b

College Station Allotment #04528

T9N R94W Sec. 1
T9N R93W por. Sec. 6

1,023 acres BLM LU

East Experiment Station Allotment #04544

T9N R93W Sec. 5, por. Sec. 6, N ½ Sec. 8, NW
¼ Sec. 9

1,379 acres BLM LU

APPLICANT: BLM

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action and Alternatives are subject to the following plan:

Name of Plan: Little Snake Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision

Date Approved: April 26, 1989

Results: The Proposed Action is consistent with the Little Snake Resource Management Plan, Record of Decision, Livestock Grazing Management objective to improve range conditions for both wildlife and livestock through proper utilization of key forage plants and adjusting livestock stocking rates as a result of vegetation studies.

The Proposed Action is located within Management Unit 2, Northern Central. The management objectives for M.U. 2 are to provide for the development of the oil and gas resource. Public lands are open to livestock grazing and management practices or range improvement projects will be

permitted and existing range improvements will be maintained consistent with the management objectives for this unit.

The Proposed Action has been reviewed for conformance with this plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3).

NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION: The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has the authority to issue temporary, non-renewable livestock grazing permits/leases consistent with the provisions of the *Taylor Grazing Act*, *Public Rangelands Improvement Act*, *Federal Land Policy and Management Act*, and Little Snake Field Office's *Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*, and 43 CFR 4130.6-2 *Nonrenewable grazing permits and leases*. This Plan/EIS has been amended by *Standards for Public Land Health in the State of Colorado*.

The following Environmental Assessment will analyze the impacts of livestock grazing on public land managed by the BLM. The analysis will recommend terms and conditions to the permit/lease which improve or maintain public land health. The Proposed Action will be assessed for meeting land health standards.

The Proposed Action addresses two allotments that do not have grazing preference attached and are considered vacant. Grazing use on these allotments may be authorized on a temporary non-renewable basis under 43 CFR 4130.6-2 to qualified applicants as defined in 43 CFR 4110.1.

PUBLIC SCOPING PROCESS: This project was posted on the 2010 NEPA log on the Little Snake Field Office web site on May 3, 2010.

BACKGROUND: The College Station #04528 and East Experiment Station #04544 Allotments are adjacent allotments that are located approximately two miles southwesterly of Great Divide, Colorado. Both allotments are similar in character and are characterized by rolling terrain dominated by a sagebrush-grass plant community. Both of these allotments are comprised of Bankhead-Jones land that was once patented and cultivated. As a result, the non-native pasture grass, crested wheatgrass, is prevalent throughout both allotments.

Both of these allotments have been vacant for many years. The forage present in either allotment is not been part of any grazing preference nor attached to anyone's base property. Both as a result of this and due to the relatively high productivity of these allotments, BLM has allowed existing permittees and lessees to use one or both of these allotments on a temporary, non-renewable basis when they have been required to rest all or portions of their permitted allotments due to wildfire or vegetation treatments.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Proposed Action

Both of these allotments would be authorized for livestock grazing use on a temporary, non-renewable basis under 43 CFR 4130.6-2. Use would be considered on a first come, first serve basis by existing permittees and lessees within the jurisdiction of the Little Snake Field Office (LSFO)

who are being required to temporarily rest areas on their existing allotments due to vegetation treatments, wildfire recovery, insect infestation, or other temporary reduction in permitted use as determined by the LSFO. Grazing use would be authorized as follows:

Allotment Name & Number	Livestock Number & Kind	Dates Begin End		%PL	AUMs
College Station #04528	66 Cattle	5/15	10/1	100	304
East Experiment Station #04544	66 Cattle	5/15	10/1	100	304

All temporary, non-renewable authorizations on the above allotments would be subject to the following Special Terms and Conditions:

- 1) The applicant must inspect and ensure that all fences and water developments are fully functional prior to turnout. The livestock operator will be responsible for all maintenance of range improvements during the period(s) that livestock are present within the allotment(s). If more than one operator is authorized within an allotment at the same time, each operator will provide BLM with a signed agreement describing which operator is responsible for each improvement.
- 2) No single pasture will receive use for the entire period between May 15 and October 1.
- 3) Pastures used in the fall will be deferred until seed-set the following year.
- 4) The operator will provide BLM with an Actual Use Report, Form 4130-5, within two weeks of the end of grazing use.

Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed:

NEPA requires federal agencies to rigorously explore and evaluate all reasonable alternatives and to briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating any alternatives that were not developed in detail (40 CFR 1502.14). As also required by NEPA, the range of alternatives considered in detail includes only those alternative that would fulfill the purpose and need for the Proposed Action.

No Grazing Alternative

No livestock grazing would take place under this alternative.

This alternative is eliminated from detailed study because it does not meet the requirements of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. When the RMP was approved, it was determined that livestock grazing was an appropriate use of this land. Eliminating grazing is not analyzed because no new issues or concerns have been identified that would require this action.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES/MITIGATION MEASURES

CRITICAL RESOURCES

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: There are no special designation air sheds or non-attainment areas nearby that would be affected by either alternative.

Environmental Consequences: Activities associated with grazing that may affect air quality, namely dust and exhaust from ranch operation vehicles as well as dust from livestock hoof action, fall below EPA emission standards for the six criteria pollutants of concern (sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, ground-level ozone, carbon monoxide, particulate matter [both PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀], and lead). Furthermore, ranch operation and livestock activities are not a significant source of these pollutant emissions that do occur in Moffat County. Impacts to air quality caused by either alternative are therefore considered negligible.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer 4/21/10

Source: United States Environmental Protection Agency National Ambient Air Quality Standards:
<http://www.epa.gov/air/criteria.html>

AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Affected Environment: Not Present

Environmental Consequences: Not Applicable

Mitigative Measures: Not Applicable

Name of specialist and date: Gina Robison 5/4/10

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: Livestock grazing authorizations are undertakings under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. During Section 106 review, a cultural resource assessment was completed for each allotment on April 26th and 29th, 2010 by Robyn Watkins Morris, Little Snake Field Office Archaeologist. The assessment followed the procedures and guidance outlined in the 1980 National Programmatic Agreement Regarding the Livestock Grazing and Range Improvement Program, IM-WO-99-039, IM-CO-99-007, IM-CO-99-019, and IM-CO-01-026. The results of the assessment are summarized in the table below. Copies of the cultural resource assessments are in the field office archaeology files.

Data developed here was taken from the cultural program project report files, site report files, and base maps kept at the Little Snake Field Office as well as from General Land Office (GLO) maps, BLM land patent records, An Overview of Prehistoric Cultural Resources Little Snake Resource Area, Northwestern Colorado, Bureau of Land Management Colorado, Cultural Resources Series, Number 20, and An Isolated Empire, A History of Northwestern Colorado, Bureau of Land Management Colorado, Cultural Resource Series, Number 2 and Appendix 21 of the Little Snake Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, Draft February 1986, Bureau of Land Management, Craig, Colorado District, Little Snake Resource Area.

The table below is based on the allotment specific analysis. The table shows known cultural resources, eligible and need data, and those that are anticipated to be in each allotment.

Allotment Number	Acres Surveyed at a Class III Level	Acres NOT Surveyed at a Class III Level	Percent of Allotment Inventoried at a Class III Level	Eligible or Need Data Sites- Known in Allotment	Estimated Sites for the Allotment *(total number)	Estimated Eligible or Need Data Sites in the Allotment (number)
04528	63	960	6%	1	27	8
04544	142	1237	10%	0	36	10

(Note *Estimates of site densities are based on known inventory data. Estimates should be accepted as minimum figures which may be revised upwards based on future inventory findings.)

Five cultural resource inventories were conducted within the College Station Allotment #04528 resulting in the complete coverage inventory of 63 acres and the recording of two cultural resources. One is a historic homestead and the other is a historic road. The 1881 GLO plat indicates a cabin in Sec. 6, T9N R93W.

Twelve cultural resource inventories were conducted within the East Experiment Station Allotment #04544 resulting in the complete coverage of 142 acres and the recording of four sites. The sites consist of three isolates and one open lithic scatter. No cultural resources are identified on the GLO plats from 1881 or 1905 within the allotment boundaries.

A high potential for historic properties occurs in both allotments due to the area having been homesteaded and having a Civilian Conservation Corps project built within its boundaries. Subsequent cultural resource inventory will be conducted in areas where livestock concentrate. The area where a cabin is shown on the 1881 GLO plat in Sec. 6, T9N R93W should be surveyed as it is close to a stream where animals congregate. Subsequent field inventory is to be completed within the next ten years.

If historic properties are located during the subsequent field inventory, and BLM determines that grazing activities are adversely impacting the properties, mitigation will be identified and implemented in consultation with the Colorado SHPO.

Environmental Consequences: The direct impacts that occur where livestock concentrate, during normal livestock grazing activity, include trampling, chiseling, and churning of site soils, cultural features, and cultural artifacts, artifact breakage, and impacts from standing, leaning, and rubbing against historic structures, above-ground cultural features, and rock art. Indirect impacts include soil erosion, gullyng, and increased potential for unlawful collection and vandalism. Continued livestock use in these concentration areas may cause substantial ground disturbance and cause irreversible adverse effects to historic properties.

As long as pastures are used in an alternating basis, increased impacts to cultural resources would not occur. Saltblock placement, which creates a concentration area, would potentially impact historic properties if they are in proximity of the placement.

Standard Stipulations for cultural resources are included in Standard and Common Terms and Conditions (Attachment 2).

Mitigation Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Robyn Watkins Morris 4/29/10

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Affected Environment: The allotments are located in an area of isolated dwellings. Oil and gas and ranching are the primary economic activities.

Environmental Consequences: No populations would be affected by physical or socioeconomic impacts of the proposed action. The proposed action would not directly affect the social, cultural or economic well-being and health of Native American, minority or low-income populations.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Louise McMinn 4/26/10

FLOOD PLAINS

Affected Environment: There are no 100-year floodplains on public lands within the allotments.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer 4/21/10

INVASIVE, NONNATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: Invasive and noxious weeds are present on both allotments. Invasive annuals such as cheatgrass, halogeton, and yellow alyssum occur in or near the allotments. Additionally, whitetop, Canada thistle and other biennial thistles are found on nearby land parcels. Invasive annual weeds are typically established in disturbed and high traffic areas, whereas, biennial and perennial weeds are less common in occurrence. Cheatgrass and halogeton are on the Colorado List C of noxious weeds while Canada thistle and whitetop are on List B. The Little Snake Field Office cooperates with Moffat County Pest Management program to employ the principals of Integrated Weed Management (IWM) to control noxious weeds on public lands.

Environmental Consequences: Vehicular access to public lands for dispersed recreation, hunting, grazing operations, livestock and wildlife movement, as well as wind and water, can cause weeds to spread into new areas. Surface disturbance from livestock concentration and human activities associated with grazing operations can also increase weed presence. The largest concern in the allotments would be for biennial and perennial noxious weeds to establish and not be detected. Once an infestation is detected it could be controlled with various IWM techniques. Land practices and land uses by the livestock operator and their weed control efforts and awareness would largely determine the identification and potential occurrence of weeds within the allotments.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Christina Rhyne 4/29/10

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: Plant communities on the two allotments are comprised of sagebrush with a healthy understory of grasses and forbs. A variety of migratory birds utilize this habitat during the nesting period (May through July) or during spring and fall migrations. The allotments contain potential nesting and/or foraging habitat for the following USFWS 2008 Birds of Conservation Concern: Brewer's sparrow, sage sparrow, and sage thrasher.

Environmental Consequences: While livestock grazing can directly impact reproductive success of migratory songbirds by trampling of nests, it is more likely that it indirectly influences reproductive success due to changes in vegetation such as species composition, height or cover. Limiting utilization levels and providing for periodic deferment in each pasture would also help to prevent cover of herbaceous species from providing adequate cover in any given area. As proposed, grazing would not alter habitat conditions to the extent that reproduction or opportunities for foraging would be reduced.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus 4/29/10

NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

A letter was sent to the Eastern Shoshone, Uinta and Ouray Tribal Council, Southern Ute Tribal Council, Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Council on May 26, 2009. The letter listed the FY2010 projects that the BLM would notify them on and projects that would not require notification. A follow up phone call was performed on July 26, 2009. No comments were received (Letter on file at the Little Snake Field Office). This project requires no additional notification.

Name of specialist and date: Robyn Watkins Morris 4/29/10

PRIME & UNIQUE FARMLANDS

Affected Environment: No Prime and/or Unique Farmlands are present within the allotments.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigation Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer 4/21/10

T&E AND SENSITIVE ANIMALS

Affected Environment: There are no federally listed threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that inhabit or derive important benefit from habitats within the two allotments.

The general area provides habitat for greater sage-grouse, a BLM sensitive species and a candidate for listing under ESA. Sagebrush stands in both allotments are classified as nesting habitat for this species. Although there are no leks located within either allotment, several active and inactive leks are located near both allotments. Sagebrush stands are in good condition with a healthy understory of grasses. Sagebrush and grass structure are adequate to provide suitable nesting habitat for grouse.

Environmental Consequences: Livestock grazing has the potential to reduce residual grass cover, an important habitat component for sage-grouse nest concealment. Season long grazing, concentrated fall grazing or grazing the same areas in the spring and then again in the fall would have the most impacts on residual grass cover since there would be little to no opportunity for re-growth before the nesting season. Even though the potential season of livestock use encompasses the entire growing season, cross-fencing within the allotments accommodates rotational grazing, ensuring that no pasture receives use for the entire growing season. If cattle are rotated through the allotments, each pasture would receive adequate growing season rest.

By requiring periodic spring deferment, available residual cover for nesting would be present each year. Overall, the Proposed Action would not degrade greater sage-grouse habitats on the

allotments.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus 4/29/10

T&E AND SENSITIVE PLANTS

Affected Environment: There are no federally listed threatened or endangered or BLM sensitive plant species present on either allotment.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 4/19/10

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no solid or hazardous wastes present on either allotment.

Environmental Consequences: There is the potential for the release of hazardous wastes in the form of vehicle fluids (oil, fuel, coolant) from equipment used during grazing management or range improvement construction or maintenance activities. The potential for releases of these materials is low and, if they were to occur, would be extremely limited with no adverse impacts to either allotment.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 4/23/10

WATER QUALITY - GROUND

Affected Environment: There can be water flowing through near-surface and over surface exposures of Wasatch Cathedral Bluffs Tongue formation on these allotments.

Environmental Consequences: Surface disturbance such as livestock grazing and associated activities would have no affect to ground water quality.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Marty O'Mara 4/23/10

WATER QUALITY - SURFACE

Affected Environment: Surface runoff from both allotments drains into Bighole Gulch, a

tributary to the Little Snake River over 15 miles downstream of the allotments. Water quality for all tributaries of the Little Snake River (below its confluence with Fourmile Creek) is use protected and must support Aquatic Life Warm 2, Recreation N, and Agricultural uses. There are no water quality impairments or suspected water quality issues for waters influenced by College Station and East Experiment Station Allotments.

Reference: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Water Quality Control Commission. 2010. Regulations #33, 37, and 93. <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/regulations/wqccregs/index.html>

Environmental Consequences: Bighole Gulch and associated tributaries are currently supporting classified uses. Permitting livestock grazing as proposed is consistent with land uses throughout the watershed and would not result in changes to water quality. Even though the season of potential livestock use is long, cross-fencing within the allotments accommodates flexibility in rotational grazing between and among years of use. The proposed grazing intensity would not compromise soil stability and vegetation community health given the good condition of the vegetation within the allotments.

Mitigation Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer 4/21/10

WETLANDS/RIPARIAN ZONES

Affected Environment: There are nearly 14 total acres of springs and associated wetland complexes within the allotments, the largest of which is approximately 9 acres (BLM Spring #028-07) that runs the length of the boundary that is shared by the two allotments. BLM Spring #028-15 was assessed in 2000 and assessed as functioning at risk (FAR) with no trend, while BLM Spring #028-09 is a developed well. All other spring/wetland complexes were assessed to be in proper functioning condition (PFC) in 2005.

Environmental Consequences: The potential for impacts to wetlands by livestock would vary by season. During spring, livestock tend to disperse because of better forage on uplands, better distribution of upland water, and acceptable or preferable thermal conditions on uplands. However, on some moist or saturated wetland soils, grazing animals more easily uproot plants and compact soils. During summer, livestock tend to be attracted to wetlands due to water availability, generally higher concentrations of nutritious palatable forage, and shade if trees and shrubs are present. In fall, livestock still tend to be attracted to wetlands primarily due to water availability and browse with higher nutrient content and palatability than mature upland forage, particularly if fall greenup of perennial grasses does not occur.

Cross-fencing within the allotments accommodates flexibility in rotational grazing between and among years of use so that no one wetland complex or spring has to be used for the entire season or the same season annually. Given the good general condition of wetlands within the allotments it is expected that the proposed action would maintain overall good wetland cover and function.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer 4/30/10

WILD & SCENIC RIVERS

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Gina Robison 5/4/10

WSAs, WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Gina Robison 5/4/10

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

SOILS

Affected Environment: Table 1 describes the major soil groups, those that cover over 125 acres, included within the College Station and East Experiment Station Allotments. All soil types are suitable for grazing. The main hazard is erosion unless close-growing plant cover is maintained and the chief limitation is that soils are very dry. Surface soil characteristics for the allotments are stable with good grass and forb production and density that are adequate to protect from accelerated erosion. There is no evidence of erosion in the form of gullies, pedestals, flow patterns, or compaction. Biological soil crusts are present where appropriate and intact.

**Table 1. Soil Summary for the College Station #04528 and
East Experiment Station #04544 Allotments**

Soil Map Unit (MU) & Soil Name (Acres in Allot.)	Map Unit Setting	Description
MU 15 Berlake-Taffom-Gretdivid complex, 10-20 % slopes	<i>Elevation:</i> 6,200 to 7,300 feet <i>Mean annual precipitation:</i> 13 to 15"	These hillslope soils are well drained with moderate permeability and medium runoff potential. Available water capacity is low to moderate and the soil profile is

890 acres	<u>Ecological Site:</u> Deep Loam/ Rolling Loam/Sandyland	typically 18 to 60 inches deep.
MU 130 Maysprings coarse sandy loam, 3 to 12 % slopes 483 acres	<u>Elevation:</u> 6,200 to 7,300 feet <u>Mean annual precipitation:</u> 11 to 13” <u>Ecological Site:</u> Rolling Loam	These toeslope soils are well drained with moderate permeability and medium runoff potential. Available water capacity is low and the soil profile is typically 18 to 60 inches deep.
MU 12 Berlake sandy loam, 3 - 12 % slopes 416 acres	<u>Elevation:</u> 6,200 to 7,200 feet <u>Mean annual precipitation:</u> 13 to 15” <u>Ecological Site:</u> Sandy Foothills	These alluvial fan/hillslope soils are well drained with moderate permeability and medium runoff potential. Available water capacity is low and the soil profile is typically 18 to 60 inches deep.
MU 131 Maysprings-Gretdivid complex, 10 to 20% slopes 304 acres	<u>Elevation:</u> 6,200 to 7,200 feet <u>Mean annual precipitation:</u> 11 to 13” <u>Ecological Site:</u> Sandyland	These soils are well to somewhat excessively drained with moderate permeability and medium runoff potential. Available water capacity is low and the soil profile is typically 18 to 60 inches deep.

Data taken from *Soil Survey of Moffat County Area, Colorado (2004)*

Environmental Consequences: Soils within the allotments are sand-based; sandy soils are the least susceptible to disturbance and wind/water erosion when wet or moist (late fall/early spring). The proposed grazing period (May 15 – October 1) coincides with the driest time of year for the area, so it is especially important to maintain adequate plant cover to help prevent erosion. Locating water and salt (or other supplements) on sites with high rock or plant/shrub cover to discourage livestock loitering will minimize impacts to dry or erosion-prone soils and help to minimize the creation of bare ground. Rotating these resources when possible would also minimize impacts to soil over the long term.

Even though the season of potential use is long, cross-fencing within the allotments accommodates flexibility in rotational grazing between and among years of use so that no one pasture has to be used for the entire season or the same season annually. Given the good condition of the vegetation within the allotments, the proposed action would maintain sufficient plant cover so that plants can produce the litter necessary for soil surface stabilization and sustain appropriate water permeability.

Mitigation Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer 4/30/10

UPLAND VEGETATION

Affected Environment: Both allotments support a sagebrush-grass plant community. Dominant plants present include Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis*),

antelope bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*), green rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus*), arrowleaf balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*), longleaf phlox (*Phlox longilobus*), scarlet globemallow (*Sphaeralcea coccinea*), crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*), western wheatgrass (*A. smithii*), and Sandberg bluegrass (*Poa sandbergii*). Crested wheatgrass is the most prevalent perennial grass throughout much of both allotments due to past agricultural practices when the lands were patented homesteads. Vigor, cover, and abundance of forbs and perennial grasses are high, with very little bare ground present.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Due to the nature of the year-to-year temporary authorizations, grazing could occur, in any given year, in any or all portions of the late spring through early fall season. Due to the requirement that grazing use only be authorized for those operators who are required to defer their permitted allotments, the timing of grazing use would coincide with the timing of the grazing use they would ordinarily be making, which could be anywhere from early season to late season to continuous, season-long use. The following grazing scenarios could occur on one or both allotments in any given year:

Deferred Grazing

This type of management restricts livestock use until forage species have reached seed ripe. For these allotments, this is generally late June through mid July. Under this scenario, livestock would not be turned out until seed set and remaining grazing would be made continuously until late September. This type of management would only have beneficial effects on forage and overall community composition if stocking rates were relatively low. Additionally, the timing and amount of available moisture can greatly influence the timing of reproductive maturity of cool season grasses, requiring close attention to plant phenology and the proper timing of turn out. If the timing of turnout is proper and stocking rates are carefully considered, deferred grazing can result in increased maturity of desirable species, but forage quality can be decreased over time.

Rotational Grazing

There are two primary variables that are manipulated through rotational grazing, intensity and frequency. Intensity refers to the amount of defoliation during a given grazing period and frequency refers to how often during the year that defoliation occurs. These variables are controlled through a combination stocking rate and timing of grazing. The most likely type of rotational grazing would be moderate intensity-low frequency. Since utilization levels of grasses are capped at 50%, no grazing use in any pasture would be allowed to continue past a moderate level of defoliation. Nearly all use would be made annually, i.e. livestock would not be allowed back into the same allotment/pasture until the following grazing season once this level is reached. This type of grazing would reduce selective grazing on desired plants and in desired areas and would tend to foster more widely-distributed grazing pressure, although the level of reduction of species selectivity may decrease when plants are mature.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 4/22/10

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC

Affected Environment: Wetlands associated with springs on the two allotments provide potential habitat for small amphibians and other aquatic wildlife.

Environmental Consequences: The grazing as described in the proposed action can incorporate deferment and rotation, allowing for ample growing season rest and adequate plant recovery periods. This would prevent riparian degradation and minimize any potential impacts to aquatic wildlife. Data from allotment visits showed aquatic wildlife habitats to be in good condition, providing suitable and productive habitat for aquatic wildlife. These conditions are would continue under the Proposed Action.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus 4/29/10

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL

Affected Environment: Plant communities on the two allotments are comprised of sagebrush stands with a healthy understory of grasses and forbs. This community provides habitat for big game species as well as small mammals, reptiles, and birds. The allotments provide important habitat for wintering big game species. Terrestrial habitat on both allotments is suitable and in good condition.

Environmental Consequences: The grazing described in the proposed action would typically incorporate deferment and rotation, which would allow for ample growing season rest and adequate plant recovery periods. Acceptable habitat conditions would continue under the grazing described in the Proposed Action.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus 4/29/10

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, those brought forward for analysis will be formatted as shown above.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Fluid Minerals		EMO 4/26/10	
Forest Management	JHS 4/23/10		
Hydrology/Ground		EMO 4/26/10	
Hydrology/Surface		ELS 4/26/10	
Paleontology		EMO 4/26/10	
Range Management		JHS 4/30/10	
Realty Authorizations		LM 4/26/10	

Recreation/Travel Mgmt		GMR 5/4/10	
Socio-Economics		LM 4/26/10	
Solid Minerals		JAM 5/6/10	
Visual Resources		GMR 5/4/10	
Wild Horse & Burro Mgmt	JHS 4/23/10		

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: These allotments and areas surrounding have historically been grazed by both sheep and cattle. Numerous maintained and unmaintained roads exist throughout the area. These roads are used regularly by local residents and ranchers as well by as the primary recreation users in the area, hunters. Wildlife populations in the area are high, especially for deer and elk that compete with livestock for available forage throughout the area. The primary impacts from all of these activities are most immediately seen in the presence of roads, cultivation on private lands, and weed presence. The Proposed Action to continue grazing on this allotment is compatible with other uses, both historic and present, and would not add any new or detrimental impacts to those that are already present.

STANDARDS

PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (animal) STANDARD: Both allotments provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species. Elk and mule deer utilize this area for winter habitat. Overall, vegetative communities within the allotments are in good condition, providing suitable habitat for terrestrial wildlife species. Shrub cover was adequate to provide winter habitat for browsing species. This standard is met and habitat conditions would remain unchanged under the Proposed Action.

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus 4/29/10

SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (animal) STANDARD: The allotments provide habitat for greater sage-grouse, a BLM sensitive species and a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Sagebrush and grass communities on the allotments are in good condition, providing suitable habitat greater sage-grouse. Overall, native vegetation is appropriate and healthy and meets this standard. This standard would continue to be met under the Proposed Action.

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus 4/29/10

PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (plant) STANDARD: Both allotments contain healthy, diverse, and vigorous plant communities. Past cultivation has resulted in high levels of non-native crested wheatgrass, but this grass is largely desirable for forage and soil stability and is not present in amounts that threaten the diversity of native species. The proposed action would permit grazing use by livestock under a variety of scenarios from year to year. By not allowing continuous grazing in any one pasture and requiring periodic deferment in each pasture, the existing diversity, vigor, and reproductive capability of the plant community would be

maintained. The proposed action would meet this standard.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 4/23/10

SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (plant)

STANDARD: There are no federally listed threatened or endangered or BLM sensitive plant species present on either allotment. This standard does not apply.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 4/19/10

RIPARIAN SYSTEMS STANDARD: This standard is currently being met. Impacts to wetlands present within the allotments will vary with season of use. Even though the season of potential use is long, cross-fencing within the allotments accommodates flexibility in rotational grazing between and among years of use so that no one wetland complex or spring has to be used for the entire season or the same season annually. Given the good general condition of wetlands, the proposed action would continue to meet this standard by maintaining overall wetland cover and function.

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer 4/30/10

WATER QUALITY STANDARD: This standard is currently being met. There are no water quality impairments or suspected water quality issues for waters influenced by College Station and East Experiment Station Allotments. Downstream of the allotments, Bighole Gulch and associated tributaries are currently supporting classified uses. The level of forage allocation and terms and conditions would maintain soil stability given the already good condition of the vegetation within the allotments. Permitting livestock grazing as proposed is consistent with land uses throughout the watershed and would not result in changes to water quality. The proposed action would continue to meet this standard.

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer 4/30/10

UPLAND SOILS STANDARD: This standard is currently being met. Soils within the allotments are sandy and are most susceptible to disturbance and wind/water erosion when dry. The proposed grazing period (May 15 – October 1) coincides with the driest time of year for the area, so it is especially important to maintain adequate plant cover to help prevent erosion. Existing cross-fencing provides for rotation which would help to maintain sufficient plant cover so that plants can produce the litter necessary for soil surface stabilization and sustain appropriate water permeability. The proposed action would continue to meet this standard.

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer 4/30/10

PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED: Uintah and Ouray Tribal Council, Colorado Native American Commission, Colorado State Historic Preservation Office.

ATTACHMENTS: Attachment 1a- Map of the College Station Allotment #04528
Attachment 1b- Map of the East Experiment Station Allotment #04544
Attachment 2- Standard and Common Terms and Conditions

SIGNATURE OF PREPARER:

DATE SIGNED:

SIGNATURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWER:

DATE SIGNED:

Finding of No Significant Impact

The environmental assessment, analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action, has been reviewed. With the implementation of the attached mitigation measures there is a finding of no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

1. Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts have been disclosed in the EA. Analysis indicated no significant impacts on society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests or the locality. The physical and biological effects are limited to the Little Snake Resource Area and adjacent land.
2. Public health and safety would not be adversely impacted. There are no known or anticipated concerns with project waste or hazardous materials.
3. There would be no adverse impacts to regional or local air quality, prime or unique farmlands, known paleontological resources on public land within the area, wetlands, floodplain, areas with unique characteristics, ecologically critical areas or designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.
4. There are no highly controversial effects on the environment.
5. There are no effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk. Sufficient information on risk is available based on information in the EA and other past actions of a similar nature.
6. This alternative does not set a precedent for other actions that may be implemented in the future to meet the goals and objectives of adopted Federal, State or local natural resource related plans, policies or programs.
7. No cumulative impacts related to other actions that would have a significant adverse impact were identified or are anticipated.
8. Based on previous and ongoing cultural surveys, and through mitigation by avoidance, no adverse impacts to cultural resources were identified or anticipated. There are no known American Indian religious concerns or persons or groups who might be disproportionately and adversely affected as anticipated by the Environmental Justice Policy.
9. No adverse impacts to any threatened or endangered species or their habitat that was determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act were identified. If, at a future time, there could be the potential for adverse impacts, treatments would be modified or mitigated not to have an adverse effect or new analysis would be conducted.
10. This alternative is in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements for the protection of the environment.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

DATE SIGNED:

ATTACHMENT #2
DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2010-0078-EA
TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Standard Terms and Conditions

- 1) Grazing permit or lease terms and conditions and the fees charged for grazing use are established in accordance with the provisions of the grazing regulations now or hereafter approved by the Secretary of the Interior.
- 2) They are subject to cancellation, in whole or in part, at any time because of:
 - a. Noncompliance by the permittee/lessee with rules and regulations;
 - b. Loss of control by the permittee/lessee of all or a part of the property upon which it is based;
 - c. A transfer of grazing preference by the permittee/lessee to another party;
 - d. A decrease in the lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management within the allotment(s) described;
 - e. Repeated willful unauthorized grazing use;
 - f. Loss of qualifications to hold a permit or lease.
- 3) They are subject to the terms and conditions of allotment management plans if such plans have been prepared. Allotment management plans **MUST** be incorporated in permits and leases when completed.
- 4) Those holding permits or leases **MUST** own or control and be responsible for the management of livestock authorized to graze.
- 5) The authorized officer may require counting and/or additional or special marking or tagging of the livestock authorized to graze.
- 6) The permittee's/lessee's grazing case file is available for public inspection as required by the Freedom of Information Act.
- 7) Grazing permits or leases are subject to the nondiscrimination clauses set forth in Executive Order 11246 of September 24, 1964, as amended. A copy of this order may be obtained from the authorized officer.
- 8) Livestock grazing use that is different from that authorized by a permit or lease **MUST** be applied for prior to the grazing period and **MUST** be filed with and approved by the authorized officer before grazing use can be made.
- 9) Billing notices are issued which specify fees due. Billing notices, when paid, become a part of the grazing permit or lease. Grazing use cannot be authorized during any period of delinquency in the payment of amounts due, including settlement for unauthorized use.

- 10) Grazing fee payments are due on the date specified on the billing notice and MUST be paid in full within 15 days of the due date, except as otherwise provided in the grazing permit or lease. If payment is not made within that time frame, a late fee (the greater of \$25 or 10 percent of the amount owed but not more than \$250) will be assessed.
- 11) No member of, or Delegate to, Congress or Resident Commissioner, after his/her election of appointment, or either before or after he/she has qualified, and during his/her continuance in office, and no officer, agent, or employee of the Department of Interior, other than members of Advisory committees appointed in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App. 1) and Sections 309 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) shall be admitted to any share or part in a permit or lease, or derive any benefit to arise therefrom; and the provision of Section 3741 Revised Statute (41 U.S.C. 22), 18 U.S.C. Sections 431-433, and 43 CFR Part 7, enter into and form a part of a grazing permit or lease, so far as the same may be applicable.

Common Terms and Conditions

- A) Grazing use will not be authorized in excess of the amount of specified grazing use (AUM number) for each allotment. Numbers of livestock annually authorized in the allotment(s) may be more or less than the number listed on the permit/lease within the grazing use periods as long as the amount of specified grazing use is not exceeded.
- B) Unless there is a specific term and condition addressing utilization, the intensity of grazing use will insure that no more than 50% of the key grass species and 40% of the key browse species current years growth, by weight, is utilized at the end of the grazing season for winter allotments and the end of the growing season for allotments used during the growing season. Application of this term needs to recognize recurring livestock management that includes opportunity for regrowth, opportunity for spring growth prior to grazing, or growing season deferment.
- C) Failure to maintain range improvements to BLM standards in accordance with signed cooperative agreements and/or range improvement permits may result in the suspension of the annual grazing authorization, cancellation of the cooperative agreement or range improvement permit, and/or the eventual cancellation of this permit/lease.
- D) Storing or feeding supplemental forage on public lands other than salt or minerals must have prior approval. Forage to be fed or stored on public lands must be certified noxious weed-free. Salt and/or other mineral supplements shall be placed at least one-quarter mile from water sources or in such a manner as to promote even livestock distribution in the allotment or pasture.

- E) Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the holder of this authorization must notify the authorized officer, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the allotment operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are encountered or uncovered during any allotment activities or grazing activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate vicinity and immediately contact the authorized officer. Within five working days the authorized officer will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places;
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the identified area can be used for grazing activities again.

If paleontological materials (fossils) are uncovered during allotment activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities that might further disturb such materials and contact the authorized officer. The operator and the authorized officer will consult and determine the best options for avoiding or mitigating paleontological site damage.

- F) No hazardous materials/hazardous or solid waste/trash shall be disposed of on public lands. If a release does occur, it shall immediately be reported to this office at (970) 826-5000.
- G) The permittee/lessee shall provide reasonable administrative access across private and leased lands to the BLM and its agents for the orderly management and protection of public lands.
- H) Application of a chemical or release of pathogens or insects on public lands must be approved by the authorized officer.
- I) The terms and conditions of this permit may be modified if additional information indicates that revision is necessary to conform with 43 CFR 4180.